



## **King County**

### **Department of Community and Human Services**

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## **FINAL PROCUREMENT PLAN**

### **Veterans and Human Services Levy: 2.7**

### **Invest in Housing Stability Program**

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#### **1. Goal (Overarching Investment Strategy)**

The Veterans and Human Services Levy Service Improvement Plan (SIP) set a goal of ending homelessness through outreach, prevention, permanent supportive housing and employment (page 18 of the Service Improvement Plan (SIP)).

#### **2. Objective (Specific Investment Strategy)**

Develop a countywide housing stability program (HSP) for veterans and other persons who are at risk of homelessness (page 21 of SIP). The funds designated in this procurement plan provide rental or mortgage assistance to low-income renters and homeowners.

#### **3. Population Focus**

This program serves eligible veterans of the U.S. military<sup>1</sup>, active duty military personnel and their families, and other low-income individuals and families facing short-term emergencies that place them at risk of homelessness. King County Housing and Community Development (HCD) staff will coordinate with the King County Veterans Program (KCVP) to ensure that the HSP serves a complementary function, and not a duplication of, the current housing related financial assistance KCVP provides to its clients.

In addition to funding an expansion of the current housing stability program, \$250,000 of these funds will be invested in a landlord liaison project<sup>2</sup> (LLP) to provide time-limited rental assistance and eviction prevention assistance to formerly homeless residents placed in permanent housing, during periods of instability to help them retain their housing.

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<sup>1</sup> Includes any branch of the U.S. armed forces, including the National Guard, Coast Guard, and Armed Forces Reserve. The HSP will follow the guidelines for eligible veterans and military personnel established by the Community Services Division.

<sup>2</sup> The Housing Stability Program contribution funds only this specific element (time-limited rental and eviction prevention assistance) of the landlord liaison project. Please see the Landlord Risk Reduction procurement plan for a detailed description of the project.

#### 4. Need and Population to be Served

As stated above, this program serves eligible veterans of the U.S. military, active duty military personnel and their families, and other individuals and families in need. As the cost of housing in most areas of the County continues to rise, the ability of low-income residents to keep their housing in the midst of financial emergencies (medical costs, illness, job loss, etc.) becomes increasingly compromised. In addition, Veterans who have returned from duty in Iraq, Afghanistan or other recent wars, and those currently deployed, may experience periods of instability as they seek to reintegrate into civilian life, where temporary housing assistance is needed. Short-term rent or mortgage assistance can provide critical relief to individuals and families, allowing them the opportunity to recover and stabilize their situation, and avoid possible further decline into homelessness.

The Community Services Division (CSD) currently runs a housing stability program through a contract with Solid Ground (formerly Fremont Public Association). Solid Ground serves as lead administering agency for the program, serving some clients on-site, but also subcontracts with agencies located in North, East and South County. In 2006, the program served 246 households. Client data show that:

- 74 percent of households served were renters.
- 36 percent of households were below 30 percent area median income (AMI), 42 percent between 31-50 percent AMI and 22 percent between 51-80 percent AMI.
- Geographically, 43 percent of the households served resided in the North/East region of the County and 57 percent in South King County<sup>3</sup>.
- Nearly 50 percent of the households served were single female headed households, and another 45 percent were comprised of two parent households and single individuals.

One goal of this effort is to build the capacity of subcontracting agencies to increase access and outreach to residents—both veterans and others—in hard to serve areas such as Skykomish, Carnation, Black Diamond, Snoqualmie Valley and Vashon Island. In addition, given its proximity to Fort Lewis, a greater number of veterans may reside in South King County, and as a result, agencies in this region may experience a further increase in clients needing housing stability services. HCD staff will continue to consult with KCVP, as well as its business partners and other vets organizations such as Army Reserve Family Programs, the American Legion and Veterans of Foreign Wars (VFW) to target outreach for the program.

Prior to the levy, the King County Veterans Program (KCVP) provided financial assistance for a variety of housing needs, among them, rent and mortgage assistance. However, the program served primarily Vietnam-era veterans with little or no income, many of whom were on the brink of homelessness. The housing needs of the expanded population of veterans—particularly recent veterans, those currently deployed, and their families—now eligible under the levy will vary depending on when they returned from combat. Hard data on the level of

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<sup>3</sup> Cities of Seattle, Auburn, Kent, Bellevue, Medina and Normandy Park receive their own Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) entitlements, some of whom run their own housing stability programs, and are not part of the consortium of cities who participate in the King County's current program.

need for rent or mortgage assistance among newer waves of veterans is less available. A military representative from the Washington National Guard Family Program visiting KCVP indicated that financial assistance often is one of the greatest needs of recent veterans, those currently deployed and their families. The impact of multiple deployments, especially among those with families, is a particularly difficult issue for active duty that may also result in the need for housing stabilization assistance.

Since KCVP already provides housing related financial assistance, the plan is to have KCVP participate in this program, serving those vets who meet eligibility criteria and need rent or mortgage assistance, and/or help paying move-in costs. KCVP will use Housing Stability Program funds to provide these services. This may be the client's only need or one of several service needs. Veterans needing financial assistance for other housing needs (such as transitional housing, shelter placement or motel expenses) may receive assistance using KCVP's other financial assistance funds. KCVP social workers will make this determination during their standard intake and assessment processes.

## **5. Funds Available**

Beginning in 2007, a total of \$1 million per year for the life of the levy is to be invested for the program, split equally between veterans and others in need.

Veterans Levy (2007-11) - \$500,000 annually

Human Services Levy (2007-11) - \$500,000 annually

In an RFP to be announced in the last quarter of this year, we anticipate \$2 million to be available starting 2008, as none of the 2007 funds will have been spent. All available housing stability funds will be included in the RFP. While CSD currently contracts with only one agency to administer the program, we will consider multiple lead agencies (who subsequently subcontract with additional agencies) if we receive several strong proposals. The HSP funds will be administered via standard county contract and agency payment procedures.

## **6. Program Description**

The SIP (page 21) states that the goal of this strategy is to develop a countywide housing stability program for veterans and other persons who are at risk of homelessness. The program provides emergency financial assistance for rent or mortgage in response to short-term crises that would otherwise prevent its timely payment, allowing low-income residents to preserve their housing. This is also in line with the Ten Year Plan to End Homelessness in King County, which identifies prevention as one of three key strategies in ending homelessness.

The Community Services Division's current Housing Stability Program is contracted through a central administering agency, Solid Ground (formerly Fremont Public Association). Solid Ground serves some clients on-site, but also subcontracts with five service provider agencies located in North, East and South County, as well as the Crisis Clinic, which operates a Community Information Line where clients are screened for eligibility, set up with appointments, and as needed, provided with other information and referrals. Solid Ground

has the operational capacity and community networks needed to run the program effectively, has achieved strong outcomes, and is well regarded by its subcontracting agencies. The program covers payment of rent or mortgage (including all back rent), fees associated with late rent or mortgage payment, and/or move-in deposits or other expenses related to a move into permanent housing. The current client outcome is whether the client retains their housing six months after receiving their assistance. In 2006, 94 percent of the households served through the program achieved this outcome.

The HSP fills an important role in enabling low-income residents to maintain their housing and preventing homelessness. The levy housing stability funds provide an opportunity to make further enhancements to the program that will enable agencies to serve more households and serve them better. Bringing in more partner (subcontracting) agencies to operate HSPs and building the capacity of smaller agencies with limited resources will enable us to address both demand and greater access by having more appointments available to residents in their communities. More appointments coupled with additional resources (trainings, greater referrals to additional services and increased technical support from central agency) for some smaller organizations will also allow these agencies to engage clients longer, and provide greater follow up to ensure that client barriers to stable housing are adequately addressed. For some partners, the HSP is only one of multiple programs and/or duties the staff is at these agencies are responsible for. The more time subcontracting agency staff can spend on direct service to clients, the better situated they are to address their needs.

Returning to the issue of demand, most of the current HSP agencies are either out of or will soon run through all of their available 2007 county client assistance dollars, putting any individuals and families turned away at further risk. The significant increase in the amount of funds available for housing stability will certainly help address the problem of limited client assistance dollars.

Further, over the past few years, rather than the single barrier of inability to pay housing costs, providers are seeing an increasing number of clients with multiple barriers to a stable housing situation (low wages, difficulty affording utilities and other basic needs, lack of health insurance and difficulty navigating public assistance systems).

We are proposing expanding the program through a joint RFP with the City of Seattle, in the last quarter of 2007, providing additional agencies the opportunity to compete for funding. All Vets-HS Levy and current Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) funds will be included in the RFP. While the current HSP is administered through a single lead agency, we will consider contracting with multiple (up to three) lead agencies to run the program, depending on the strength of the proposals received.

The lead agency or agencies selected to administer the HSP as part of the RFP process will be expected to employ and/or build from the current program model (described in the beginning of this section). Proposed additions and/or changes to the current program include:

- Increase contract lead agency staffing so that they have the capacity to effectively implement a program with funding that will increase three fold.
- Increase the number of case workers to provide greater coverage, particularly in south county and rural cities/towns.
- Hold longer appointments and provide greater client follow up to address additional barriers to maintaining housing (short term supportive services).
- Increase the pool of potential subcontractors by improving the capacity of small, ethnically specific and/or geographically focused agencies.
- Include KCVP as a subcontracting agency to administer a housing stability program for veterans.
- Increase the number of referrals to other service providers to address additional barriers.

Developing an estimate of the number of additional households that the program will serve is difficult because the level of community need is largely unknown. In general, the program serves an emergency role, often times after a household is already behind on their rent or mortgage. In addition, some agencies currently participating in the program lack sufficient organizational capacity to serve additional households. Using the current ratio of households served to funds available as a rough guide, approximately 750 households could potentially be served. However, this figure is largely affected by the dollar amount of client assistance that is awarded to each household. In addition, this number will also be dependent on adequate expansion of the program to more of the county through targeted outreach and increased access. Further, program success may also be assessed beyond simply the number of households served, but also according to its ability to expand to address additional barriers that households are facing.

## **7. Coordination/Partnerships and Alignment Within and Across Systems**

Planning for this program was carried out by CSD staff in collaboration with the cities of Seattle, Kent, Bellevue and Redmond, Solid Ground and its subcontract providers, the King County Veterans Program, and South and East King County Planners groups. The City of Seattle is interested in issuing a joint RFP with the county on its housing stability program. An effort will be made to identify and establish similar strategic partnerships that leverage additional resources, both in terms of funding and organizational capacity.

King County Veterans and Human Services Levy and City of Seattle funds will be used to build upon the current successful model to address client needs that have received inadequate attention due to limited resources. The greater the collaboration and system coordination the better we can establish a comprehensive strategy to help stabilize families, and not only prevent homelessness, but to the extent possible, prevent the emergencies that contribute to it. HCD staff will consult with cities and service providers throughout the county to seek opportunities to expand program's reach and bring in new agencies that have established relationships with the local community. Program development and implementation will also require ongoing and increased collaboration with existing and new stakeholders throughout the county. This includes human services provider agencies and advocates, tenant advocacy and legal assistance organizations, city governments and landlords. Collaborations that increase the capacity of smaller participating organizations with more limited resources will be especially important. In addition, increased awareness among organizations of the needs

of veterans, their families and others, increased outreach, and referrals to additional needed resources, will also be critical.

## **8. Timeline**

HCD is planning to issue a joint Request for Proposals with the City of Seattle for the Housing Stability Program, to serve both veterans and others in need, in the last quarter of 2007. The funds invested as part of the LLP are expected to follow a timeline similar to Housing Stability RFP. The anticipated timeline is as follows:

<b>Activity</b>	<b>Date</b>
RFP released publicly	Mid October 2007
Bidder's Conference	Late October
RFPs due	Mid/Late November
Review of applications	Early December
Awards announced	End December 2007

## **9. Provider Selection/Contracting Process**

Both levy oversight boards will send one member to participate in the process of reviewing and making recommendations on the housing stability award. HCD staff will complete a threshold review of proposals to ensure completion and that eligibility requirements for funding are met. Proposals will be assigned to review team members to read and scored based on set criteria. Review teams will include DCHS staff from various programs, other public funders and levy oversight board members. Scores will then be compiled and projects ranked. The review team will meet as a group to discuss the highest ranked proposals, and make a final recommendation to the DCHS Director, who will make the final funding decision.

## **10. Geographic Coverage**

Levy funding for the Housing Stability Program will be open to individuals and families throughout King County. The geographic range of the current the program extends to cities in North, South and East of King County, as well as unincorporated areas. While we will continue to operate and expand in these areas, the levy funds also provide the opportunity to serve residents of cities that are not part of the current HSP<sup>4</sup>. In addition, the lead administering agency will seek to identify and increase access to residents in areas of the county that are difficult to serve, such as Skykomish, Carnation, Black Diamond, Snoqualmie Valley and Vashon Island. These efforts will be enabled primarily through the hiring of additional case workers to increase the program's geographic coverage, and additional central agency program administration staff. The lead agency will make a special effort to bring these additional resources and technical assistance to smaller agencies, coordinate trainings, and lead expanded outreach efforts. In hard to serve areas, the lead agency will look for opportunities to collaborate with community centers or other appropriate organizations that function as resources for residents typically seek assistance.

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<sup>4</sup> Seattle, Bellevue, Kent, Auburn, Normandy Park and Medina.

The lead agency or agencies will be required to describe their outreach strategies and how they will make the program accessible to households countywide and to a broad array of populations in need. Agency geographic reach and/or the reach of their countywide networks will be part of the RFP review criteria. The lead agency or agencies selected through the RFP process will be required to work with HCD staff to ensure adequate outreach and countywide access to the program. Outreach may include ads in papers; flyers; and engaging residents in community settings such as neighborhood centers, city public assistance centers, schools, police precincts, churches, and check cashing facilities.

HCD will continue to require agency reporting of client demographic data that includes household location within the County. HCD and contract agency staff will regularly review the data to help assess and further target its outreach and resources. The contract agency will also seek input from participating agencies for continual improvements to increase the program's geographic reach.

## 11. Funding/Resource Leverage

HCD staff are working with the City of Seattle to release a joint RFP for the housing stability program. The amount of City of Seattle funds included in the RFP will be determined during the development of the RFP. HCD staff will continue to pursue such partnerships and opportunities to leverage additional resources to increase the impact of the program.

<b>Housing Stability RFP</b>	<b>2007</b>	<b>2008</b>
Community Devt Block Grant	\$339,974	\$355,031
Vets-HS Levy - Housing Stability Program	\$725,000	\$750,000
Vets-HS Levy - Landlord Liaison Project*	\$250,000	\$250,000
Vets-HS Levy - 2007 Contract Amendment	\$25,000	--
<b>Total Amount</b>	<b>\$1,339,974</b>	<b>\$1,355,031</b>

\*Housing stability funds to be invested in a landlord liaison project to provide time-limited rental assistance and eviction prevention assistance to formerly homeless residents placed in permanent housing.

In 2007, we are proposing an addition of \$25,000 (above) in client assistance to the current Solid Ground contract. By August of this year, several agencies in South and East King County participating in the HSP will have exhausted their available funds for rental/mortgage assistance. Rather than turn people away, this small infusion would allow these agencies to continue to meet their clients' needs for the remainder of 2007.

As part of increased outreach efforts, a portion of the RFP funds may be used for targeted project promotion in underserved areas of the County or to veterans, such as public service announcements in specific areas of the county. In addition, a portion of these funds may also serve as start-up funds for agency trainings to assist staff in effectively identifying and addressing the needs of veterans, as well as ensuring appropriate referrals to clients with multiple barriers/needs.

## 12. Evidence-Based Best Practices

Homelessness prevention programs are often referred to as those that “close the front door” to homelessness. That is, whenever possible, we should take measures that stop people from ever becoming homeless. A study released by the US Department of Housing and Urban Development<sup>5</sup> identified homelessness prevention activities that were part of effective programs around the country, including:

- cash assistance for rent or mortgage
- supportive services for permanently housed
- legal assistance to prevent eviction
- housing subsidies
- rapid exit from shelter

The first three services identified above are either already part of or are being proposed as elements of the HSP design described in Section 6. HSP does not currently serve those who do not have permanent housing, so the last activity does not apply for the purposes of this proposal.

The following are examples that have been cited as model prevention programs:

*Hennepin County, Minnesota.* Often cited as a model program focused on prevention, the program serves low-income individuals and families at imminent risk of homelessness. The program provides legal assistance around tenant eviction, financial assistance, short and long term case management, and landlord/tenant mediation and assistance in securing new housing if housing is lost without requiring stay in homeless shelter. Ninety-six percent of clients in the program kept their housing 12 months after enrolling in the program.

*Community Care Grant Program, Washington, D.C.* A prevention program focused on the same population as Hennepin County. They attempt to intervene at the earliest point possible. Clients enrolled in the program can work through one of seven Family Support Centers throughout the city with housing specialists on staff, and can receive up to \$7,000 in support, depending on their circumstances. Clients go through an in-depth assessment, develop a case plan, and work with a case manager to determine progress made on their case plan and helps ensure that the family work to avoid another housing crisis.

### **13. Disproportionality Reduction Strategy**

In 2006, client data reported to the county show that 62 percent of those served through the Housing Stability Project were from ethnic/racial minorities. On average, people of color have lower incomes, and in turn, are more vulnerable to the high cost of housing and changes in income and expenses, especially those that create a short-term crisis. In this light, HSP helps reduce the disproportionate impact to communities of color by enabling them to keep their housing when problems arise. If individuals and families’ housing is secured during short-term difficulties, they are better able to regain their footing and get back on a stable path. The HSP has broader benefits to these families as well. Maintaining housing can help prevent turning to predatory lenders, home foreclosure, detrimental impact of an eviction, and possible involvement in the criminal justice, foster care and other systems.

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<sup>5</sup> *Strategies for Preventing Homelessness*. (2005) US Department of Housing and Urban Development.



The disproportionate impact of unaffordable housing on communities of color and other underserved communities will be addressed by identifying and providing needed resources to increase the capacity of smaller agencies who could become part of the HSP, as well as strengthening partnerships and coordination among these and larger, more established organizations. This may be accomplished through specific agency trainings, greater hands-on collaboration between larger and smaller agencies, and targeted efforts by the lead contract agency or agencies to identify a small group of community organizations to establish housing stability programs, that are well-positioned to reach people of color, but who may need assistance to get the programs operational. These new agencies would be those with established relationships in communities of color and have demonstrated expertise providing effective, culturally appropriate services that are relevant to the experiences of minority communities.

In addition, we will also encourage the lead administering agency or agencies to subcontract with community providers with expertise serving specific populations that include the disabled, elderly, rural households, young adults, those experiencing domestic violence and others.

HCD will announce the RFP as widely as possible to include nonprofit, public and other entities working on an array of housing related issues, with a special focus on targeting organizations that serve racially and ethnically diverse populations.

#### **14. Dismantling Systemic/Structural Racism**

As with homelessness throughout the nation, racial and ethnic minorities are overrepresented among the homeless population in King County. According to the King County Committee to End Homelessness, people of color represent 61 percent of the County's homeless, while making up only 20 percent of the general population. An estimated 62 percent of homeless families are people of color, with African American families accounting for 43 percent of *all* homeless families. Although rates within communities of color vary, as a group, in King County, people of color represent a disproportionately large share of low-income residents, which places these individuals and families at greater risk of maintaining a stable housing situation and even slipping into homelessness.

Staff will continue to seek out and build its list of agencies throughout the County that are committed to providing culturally relevant services to minority communities so that they are informed of the RFP opportunity. Staff will also continue to monitor client data and conduct adequate oversight and review of agency service provision.

## **15. Cultural Competency**

All DCHS staff will be attending a cultural competency training relating to contracts and monitoring so that we can improve our own cultural competency, as well as the cultural competency of the agencies we fund (and their subcontractors) to serve an increasingly culturally diverse public. All RFP's include questions about cultural competency and how the ethnic and cultural make-up of clients served is considered in agency planning, evaluation and service provision. Additional trainings for staff at participating agencies, as well as subcontracting agencies, particularly with regard to meeting the needs of veterans are also being discussed.

## **16. Improvement in Access to Services**

Although we intend to expand the HSP's geographic reach, the program currently has a relatively strong countywide presence. In 2006, 43 percent of the households served resided in the North/East region (13 cities) of the county and 57 percent in South King County (ten cities). By building the capacity of smaller agencies with limited resources, especially those in outlying areas of the county, the program can reach more clients in need, engage them longer and connect with them in their home community, rather than requiring them to travel longer distances. In addition, by building the capacity of agencies to address the multiple barriers to stable housing that many clients face—whether directly or through proper referrals—the program can work toward longer-term improvements for their clients, and also seek to prevent emergencies from arising. Further, efforts to bring new agencies to the program, and efforts to address structural racism and disproportionality reduction, will also help improve access to housing stability services.

## **17. Outcomes**

Outcomes for this program include:

- Clients retain stable housing for at least 6 months after assistance awarded (will explore the possibility of collecting data on housing retained after 12 months)
- Client successfully addressed additional barrier(s) in the past six months

## **18. Process and Outcome Evaluation**

The investment strategy to prevent homelessness from reoccurring will be evaluated on both process and outcomes by evaluators hired in the DCHS, Community Services Division. We will work with the evaluators to measure the effect of the levy on process issues such as startup activities, contracting processes, collaboration and system level changes that occur, and on the outcomes listed above.